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ABSTRACT

This article presents an address on anthropomorphism in psychology. Anthropomorphism assures that human beings are given human characteristics when participating in psychological research. This is significant because the research community does not often report results of studies in the language of feelings, thoughts, or desires, which has led to the pathology of psychology. The paper gives the historical perspective on why this pathology has developed in the profession, and concludes that psychology must be tolerant of the unknown, or the mystery of life. (JDM)

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Anthropomorphism in Psychology [Draft August 17, 1999] --- David Bakan. APA Boston August 21, Staffordshire RoomWestin Hotel Copley Place. 1100am to 1150am

Denial of mind the effort, during the last century.

The topic that I want to address in this presentation is anthropomorphism in psychology. What I mean by that is allowing that human beings have human characteristics when we do psychological research.

A reasonable person would wonder how it could be otherwise.

Yet there is a received view that psychology is most scientific when it is least anthropomorphic. That view is at least a century old. The research community in psychology seems to like it best when findings are reported in terms that do not refer, say, to feelings, or thoughts, or desires.

I am inclined to regard this as a pathology, a disease of the science of psychology. I suspect it will go down that way in the history of our science. The historian will say, they denied the existence of the mind, the significance of the mind, the powers of the mind, and especially the mind as a legitimate object of scientific investigation. Indeed, professors of psychology used to fail students who used the term mind.

The denial is extraordinary in that it seriously assumes the very opposite of a basic assumption of everyday life, that the ways in which one understands things, feels about things, desires and aspires to things, chooses things, and consequently does things is the main business of life.

This denial stands in marked contrast to the fact that for most of civilised history the minds of human beings have been regarded as their defining and distinguishing characteristic, as witness even the identification of the human being as the rational animal, homo sapiens.

The worst of all is that it has been a major obstacle in the bringing of our research resources to bear properly on the processes of human mentation,-- even quite literally in terms of research funding and academic appointments.

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Theory of Mind

I have been concerned with this question for a long time. I was brought to think about it again on reading about some findings and theorizing that have come to be grouped under the rubric of "theory of mind." I have been particularly impressed with the discovery that so-called autistic children appear to be "mind-blind." [Baron-Cohen]

Let me provide a bit of history on this.

David Premack, whom I knew once as an ardent Skinnerian behaviorist, found himself compelled to allow that a chimpanzee might be able to understand a human being's actions in terms of mental states. [Premack, D. and Woodruff, G. 1978 Does the chimpanzee have a 'theory of mind"? Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 4, 515-26. Premack.s book. Other literature.].

Extraordinary! Even the chimpanzee can recognise that human beings have mental states.

Following that a number of investigators have been coming to the position that the apprehension of mind of others is a normal, and early, direct perceptual phenomenon

And, as I indicated, one of the most interesting developments is the identification of deficiency of such direct perception of mentation among the so-called autistic children[Baron-Cohen]

Mind blindness and psychology.

Then to the thought that I could not avoid. Thinking about psychology in the last hundred years or so. PSYCHOLOGY HAS BEEN SUFFERING FROM MIND-BLINDNESS. And perhaps the leading psychologists may have been autistic.

Nor could I resist the thought that if psychologists were to have remained consistent in maintaining this kind of mind-blindness as the critical standard of science, the discovery in connection with autistic children could never have been made.

The pathology of psychology--problem involved

We are thereby brought to the thought that our psychology has been pathological, that we have been suffering from autism in the development of our psychology: Psychology as the autistic science.

I am extraordinarily uneasy about the position that this places me in. I think I have been too well disciplined intellectually to allow "pathology" to stand for a good answer to any question.

It is important for the community of psychologists to come to an understanding of this pathology, but not just in psychological terms, although this does not mean to exclude them. For this would be what my logic teacher would have called an "ad hominem argument." And I strongly agree that the "ad hominem argument" is to be counted among the fallacies.

In the remainder of my time I would like to put forth at least a few considerations which might help us to come to a proper understanding of this pathology, while not tripping over ourselves with an ad hominem argument, and not avoiding the psychological either. I will let you judge as to whether I am successful.

My question is: How could it have happened that a science of psychology should develop by taking the denial of the existence or significance of its subject matter as a fundamental canon?

I cannot be exhaustive. But I would like to do two things. First, I want to briefly indicate an hypothesis about the *motivation* for this pathology. Indeed, I will be psychological in this. But I would stress that this is psychological in a larger sense, psychological in perhaps a cultural and historical sense.

Second, I want to look briefly at certain things that happened in the history of the philosophy of science, most notably, the shift from cause to law.

Thesis about power.---Bacon, Morse, Watson.

The development of human power over the last several centuries has been awe-ful. I think that the denial has something to do with this giant step in human power. .

We live in an historical period in which the powers of human beings over nature have grown considerably, manifested in giant steps in fields such as engineering , agriculture, medicine, defense, mining, manufacturing, transportation, communication, etc. Our collective powers are truly awe-full. And we are collectively profoundly ambivalent about those powers.

Let me put together two very important historical figures to display the great ambivalence that we have with respect to power, and to the scientific studies that contributed to that power. The first is Francis Bacon and the other is Samuel F. B. Morse.

Bacon lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He was arrogant and unabashedly thrilled with knowledge and its power. One of my teachers, Kurt Rosinger, used to say of Bacon that "He crowed like a rooster over science."

He declared that all knowledge as his province, and that knowledge was synonymous with power.

Samuel F. B. Morse lived in the middle of the 19th century, a couple of centuries later. He invented the telegraph. It was just before the Civil War, just at the beginning of that great American burst of urbanisation, industrialisation, communication, and transportation.

Having invented the telegraph, and having strung a wire between Washington and Baltimore (with help from a government grant), he sent out an amazingly humble and pious first message: "What hath God wrought?" taken from the Book of Numbers [23:23].

Indeed, God had not wrought the telegraph. Morse had done so with knowledge from science and with money from the United States government.

There is an obvious psychological dynamic: A vaulting sense of power arousing a fear of God and a demand for humility.

Residuum in behaviorism

There is a copy of this dynamic in the history of psychology. John B. Watson crowed like Bacon crowed when he pronounced that the aim of psychology was the prediction and control of human behavior, while at the same time humbly declaring that the mentational processes of human beings was completely off-limits for him.

The fact is that Watson set himself up for failure, as it were. No way can anybody predict and control the behavior of another human being save that he know the mental processes of the other human being.

Causality in psychology

Let me now talk about the notion of cause, causality, of 'what we can consider to be the cause of what' when we speak of psychological phenomena. .

That notion of cause, in a very special form, has had a very strong presence in American psychology of the 20th century. When all psychological phenomena were conceptualised in accordance with the stimulus-response paradigm, stimulus was taken as cause, response was taken as effect, and learning was defined as the formation of causal connections between them.

This is a caricature. But not mine. It is this caricature form which was taken as representing the scientific maturity that psychology was presumed to have reached.

Cause is the foundation intuition, and assumption of rationality and of science.

But let us not turn against the notion of cause because of the caricature. It is a foundational metaphysical intuition about the nature of the world.

Causality is our answer to the question of why anything exists. When we ask that question, we answer ourselves by saying that the thing exists because it was caused by something, caused by something that pre-existed it, that originated it.

The study of causes is the major business of science. That's what science is. It is the discovery of the causes of things.

Let me speak psychologically. Human beings universally, and at very early ages, identify cause and effect, distinguish cause from effect, understand the determinative role of cause on effect, and recognise the contingency of the existence of effect on cause. Note Piaget, and so on.

Aristotle on cause.

Let us consider a little history. Let's go first to Aristotle.

The first thing to take note of is that Aristotle provided two different views of causality.

One of them about cause in nature, especially biology. The other about cause in the sense of human fabrication.

He had first what we can call a metabolic view of causality. The Greek word for change is metabole, a word which we have taken into our language as metabolism He was concerned with substance, quality, quantity, location, and their changes. He was concerned with understanding substrate, process, potentiality, actuality and actualisation. This may be one of Aristotle's most important contributions. However, I will not give much attention to it in these presentation. Because, my purpose is, as I have indicated, to learn something about how we went astray.

Aristotle's other theory, as it were, is about the human being as the cause of that which transpires. Cause, in this sense, is, for Aristotle, mental cause, that is the mind of the human being as the cause of what happens.

His elaboration of the four causes, the famouss four causes, is basically an view of how the human being, through his mental powers, produces things or directs things or manages things.

This is very clear if we look at the examples that he uses. Let me cite Aristotle directly

In Book II, Part 3 of the Physics, Aristotle writes, describing four senses in which the word cause is used.

"(1) that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists, is called 'cause', e.g. the bronze of the statue, [or] the silver of the bowl....

"In another sense (2) the form or the archetype...are called 'causes'....

"Again (3) the primary source of the change... e.g. the man who gave advice is a cause, the father is cause of the child, and generally what makes of what is made, and what causes [a] change of what is changed [are causes].

"Again (4) [cause is understood] in the sense of end or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is done, e.g. health is the cause of walking about. ('Why is he walking about?' we say. 'To be healthy', and, having said that, we think we have assigned the cause.) The same is true also of all the intermediate steps which are brought about through the action of something else as means towards the end, e.g. [dieting], purging, drugs, or surgical instruments are means towards health. All these things are 'for the sake of' . .... " [Aristotle]

These are characteristically referred to as the material, the formal, the efficient and the final causes.

Note that all the causes are prior to the effects. The material cause is prior to the effect as the locus of potentiality. And the formal, efficient and final causes are prior as mentational in the person who is causing the changes.

By providing these latter examples, Aristotle has clearly indicated that the concept of cause is largely to be understood as part of the vocabulary for describing human power in acting in the world.

Methodological note.

Let us analyse this a bit.

There are three aspects of Aristotle's characterisation of cause that may be identified.

The first is PRIORITY, in the sense of cause being prior to effect.

The second is AGENCY, in the sense of the human being mentationally causing the event to take place.

The third, is NECESSITY. That is the "have to-ness" of relationship between cause and effect. It is this last, barely implicit in the Aristotelian characterisation, but there, to which I will now give attention.

Newton and law

Let me now skip some two millenia from Aristotle to Newton, to the great revolution in human thought that started with Copernicus and wound up with Newton, and his famous three laws of motion.

There is an important change here. Newton was talking about laws, and not causes. For Newton and his gang God had given laws to nature at the time of creation, just as God had given laws to Moses at Sinai. God was the great agent of all things. And these laws, containing the necessity associated with logic and mathematics, were brought to bear on all that transpires..

Let us then look at Newton's three laws of motion. They came to represent the ultimate expression of non-agency, save that which derives from God in making the laws, the absence of priority, and total necessity. The fact is, however, that there is some waffling in Newton's presentation of the laws.

The first of Newton's three laws of motion allowed that "Every body continues in its state of rest or of uniform motion in a right line unless it is compelled to change that state by forces impressed upon it."

Note that Newton slipped in some prioritism and agency into that one. There is the unless, which allows for prioritism. There is compel which allows for agency. And the necessitarianism is weak with both the unless and the compel.

Let us go to Newton's second law. It reads, " The change of motion is proportional to the motive force impressed and is made in the direction of the right line in which that force is impressed."

Here he slips in the prioritism with his necessitarianism.

And finally, in the third law, "To every action there is always opposed an equal reaction; or the mutual actions of two bodies upon each other are always equal and directed to contrary parts."

Here he clearly drops prioritism.

The laws of Newton then carry three deep contradictions, prioritism/no prioritism, agency/no agency, necessitarianism/no necessitarianism.

The contradictions do not become problematic in dealing with highly stable systems. Let me emphasize the fact that this revolution started with astronomy, with extraordinarily stable observations, and little possibility of human agency. After all, the big dipper was always the big dipper, and no one could ever even dream of changing that. And the movements of the planets had been discovered to have remarkably regular repeated patterns, whether described by Ptolemy or Copernicus.

The subject matter was very different from the kind of thing that Aristotle was mainly concerned with, the living, the mental and the humanly generated and fabricated, such as making a bowl, fathering a child, giving useful advice and prescribing regimens and medicines for good health. Aristotle was never held in high regard for his astronomy.

The Newtonian project of describing the way the world was created by God came to converge with some remarkable practical applications, not least being some great benefits in connection with navigation, badly needed for England's great imperialistic expeditions.

The Aristotelian four-cause model, which described how human beings can be causative in the world, was in disarray. While Aristotelianism had the appearance of being relevant to human empowerment, Newtonianism, paradoxically, the position that gave the major agency in the world to God, was overwhelming with respect to empowerment.

Hume

Let us now look briefly at two important figures that came after Newton, David Hume and Immanuel Kant.

It can be said that while cause, in the Aristotelian senses, had been eclipsed by Newton's powerful advances with the concept of law, it was salvaged, at least to some degree, by Hume.

Hume essentially departed from the presumptive agency of God and the necessitarianism of law, and restored priority.

He adamantly rejected the deism that had been so critical as the locus of the ultimate agency in the world.

But he also drew in the curtain of the limits of knowledge. The Newtonians claimed to be able to understand the works of God. God was a mathematician, it was said, and through the mathematics to be discovered in the world, one could come closer to God.

Hume, on the contrary, took an atheistic position, and a virtually agnostic position with respect to the determination of events in nature. What he left for human beings was a projection of causality in the world. He made causality very much a matter of human creation rather than Divine creation.

Hume argued that all human knowledge derives from the experience of "impressions.," The RELATIONSHIP between cause and effect, that is, causality itself, is supplied by the human mind. When an impression of type A is experienced together with an impression of type B with some frequency we are drawn to believe that A causes B. The connection, Hume said, is a habit of the mind derivative from repetition. Hume substituted the human agency of imagination, invention, habituation and projection for the agency and necessity of causality associated with God in Newtonianism.

But he did re-affirm the significance of the concept of cause in the face of the notion of law which had virtually eclipsed it.

Kant

Let us now consider Kant in this connection. Immanuel Kant was a teacher of mathematics and physics for many years. He was very attracted to Newton. He moved to the study of philosophy. Not the least was his reading of David Hume, which he said, awakened him from his slumber.

After many years he finally got a professorship, and then published nothing for 10 years. It was then that he put out the work that won him his great fame, the Critique of Pure Reason, in 1781..

Kant was very aware of the problem of the difference between cause and law. In the Critique of Pure Reason he provided a shabby solution which was quickly embraced by many. Indeed, it is Kant's shabby solution that provides the received view, the view that cause-effect and law are not essentially different.

I hope that I can be succinct and still do justice to Kant's offering.

Hume's position posed problems. It salvaged cause. However, it especially left no place for discovery in the Newtonian sense; that is it left no place for the discovery of the objective and necessary laws in the world.

Kant appreciated the intellectual problem and sought to overcome it. His seeming solution is very important historically. For while, as we will see, it is objectionable, nonetheless it makes the bearing of the difficulty more tolerable.

Kant basically bundled cause and law together. We can characterise Kant's solution as a conflation, a syncretism, of cause-effect with law.

I cannot go into great detail. However, let me just highlight how Kant treated the difficulty with respect to priority.

The concept of cause necessarily entails a cause which is prior to the effect. However, the concept of law does not.

Kant recognised that in their best applications the concept of cause made the priority of cause a major feature; while he also recognised that the best applications of the concept of law allowed them to exist outside of time, just

as logical propositions and mathematical propositions are outside of time. The latter is evidenced in the fact that many of the propositions of the physics that came after time work backwards as well as forwards.

Let me read to you how Kant treated this matter. He openly recognised the problem. He writes

"a difficulty arises....The principle of the causal connection among appearances is limited...to their serial succession...."

He then proceeds to utter a set of four extraordinarily disparate explanations:

First, he says, that we need not be too concerned because "the great majority of efficient causes are simultaneous with their effects..." This is simply untrue. It is especially untrue in connection with the many causal connection that are found in biology and psychology, where the temporal interval between cause and effect may be very long.

Second, Kant says the temporal order is not what is critical. It is only order in a more general sense that is of significance. He says, "...it is the *order*...not the *lapse* of time with which we have to reckon [in connection with causality]....

Third, he argues that if there is a temporal interval it is a vanishing quantity, and therefore similar to non-existent, while still maintaining priority. The influence of the calculus in this formulation is evident. He says , "The time between the causality of the cause and its immediate effect may be [a] vanishing [quantity], and they may THUS be simultaneous; but the relation [that is, the priority] of the one to the other will always still remain determinable in time."

Fourthly, recognising the importance of a prior mental act on the part of a human being that is associated with causality, he simply allows the contradiction. He states,

"If I view as a cause a ball which impresses a hollow as it lies on a stuffed cushion, the cause is simultaneous with the effect. But I still distinguish the two [the cause and the effect] through the time relation of their dynamical connection. For if I lay a ball on a cushion, a hollow follows upon the

previous flat smooth shape.... " [Kant, I. Critique of Pure Reason. London: Macmillan, 1963, pp. 227-228]

Neglect of human mind as causative

Let us consider what this might mean for psychology. I cannot of course deal with all the ramifications of the syncretism of cause and law in the history of contemporary thought. I do, however, want to make one point clear.

As a result of it one of the most important characteristics of human life has been severely neglected in the development of psychology, this is the role of human mentation as being causative of that which transpires in the world, in the Aristotelian sense.

The fact is that the human mind is itself a major cause, or locus of many major causes.

Granted, of course, that it can be argued that the chain of causation is endless, that every cause is itself an effect, and so on. But we have to put that aside in the development of our sciences. We make some decisions about where we step in; and we have to step in wherever we happen to be..

Let's look at the great paradigm that has dominated psychology for a great part of this last century. This is the paradigm of STIMULUS and RESPONSE. This paradigm, which had been argued as being the ultimate universal unit for psychology, enters the chain of causation at the ENVIRONMENT as cause, and all that follows in time as EFFECT. The result of this decision is that anything in which it might be of significance to take note of the human being as agent, that is, the human being as the cause of other effect, is essentially nullified.

It nullifies a great deal of what psychology should be interested in. Let me give but one example. This paradigm divides psychologists from that which

most lawyers are forced to deal with. I assume that the things that come to demand the attention of lawyers are important.

Over the years I have had several occasions to be involved in dialogue with lawyer-scholars who have been interested in somehow finding a bridge between law and psychology. This paradigm always arises as a stumbling block. For the lawyer can never deny the factuality of mentation being the cause of conduct., and can never accept the idea that environment is the only place to enter into consideration of the causes of human behavior. As one lawyer put it to me once when I was discussing it with him, "Psychologists and lawyers just pass each other like ships in the night when they start with their stimulus and response."

Time

Let me make some observations concerning time.

One of the important consequences of the history that I have alluded to is that it discouraged psychology from taking account of the significance of time in connection with psychological phenomena. As I noted, those who followed Kant in what he wrote in the Critique of Pure Reason--and his influence in this regard was great--tended to minimise the significance of time. And this they did in various ways.

I need to make a distinction with respect to time. On the one hand, time is the matrix of history, it is the matrix within which whatever takes place takes place. On the other hand, time is merely an interval that can occur at any time. This is the way in which time occurs in the various laws of motion. Within the Newtonian framework time is a variable, and not the matrix of history.

In its early history as a modern science, psychology opted for time as a variable. Reaction time was a favorite topic of early empirical research and theory.

Experiment

More significant than reaction time was the penchant of psychologists for the use of the experiment. The experiment is, in its very nature, an affirmation that time in history is not important. For it is of the essence of the experimental method that the EXPERIMENT MAY BE PERFORMED AT ANY TIME. For the phenomena that can be studied experimentally are necessarily phenomena in which time is a matter of indifference.

Time as whenness, time as the matrix within which events take place, exists for the experiment only for providing the opportunity to do the experiment. Otherwise, time in an experiment, is usually a small interval of time, which can occur at any time, as it were. Indeed, it has been characteristic of psychological experiments as they have been performed in this century to remove, as much as possible, all things which are linked to time, such as culture and language and even stage of evolution -since in some research enterprises animals and humans have been used indifferently in experiments.

At the beginning of this century Freud and the other psychoanalysts sought desperately to find the meaning of psychological phenomena in terms of their location in time. Thus, there was the emphasis of the relationship between experiences in infancy and childhood on adult experience. Indeed, there were a few efforts of studying major historical figures, Leonardo, Woodrow Wilson, Luther and Ghandi, for example, within their historical contexts. And then there were great speculative efforts at seeing psychological phenomena within frameworks of thousands of years, as exemplified by Jung and by Freud, as in his Moses and Monotheism.

However, the study of psychological phenomena as having their meaning within the matrix of time, has been sorely neglected. The recent works stressing the significance of narrative might be mentioned as a contrary indicator.

Determinism and Over determinism.

Let me now turn to DETERMINISM. As we have seen, with Kant we had a kind of overriding of cause In neither the view of cause as developed by Aristotle, nor in the variety of considerations concerning cause as developed by Hume, do have anything that corresponds to the notion of determinism which is a major part of the received view of science which we have today.

It was just a few years after Kant published the Critique of Pure Reason was published, that another thinker, influenced both by Newton and by Kant, came up with the ultimate deterministic formula. This was LaPlace. He allowed that a superhuman intelligence [say God] might grasp the position of every particle in the universe and every force acting upon it. For this intelligence "nothing would be uncertain and the future and the past would be present to its eyes." [Philosophical Essay on Probabilities, p. 4].

It is to be noted that God is even removed as an agent, and is included only as omniscient in this view. Yet, as I have said, it is a major part of the received view.

Freud [who had learned his philosophy from Franz Brentano, the greatest Aristotelian scholar of his day, who was then teaching at the University of Vienna] provided the alternative notion of "over-determinism". That is things psychological could be additive in a kind of convergence. However, to affirm that psychological events are over determined is to deny that they are determined. [Cf Psychopathology of Everyday Life.]

This notion of of over-determinism is only possible by by-passing Kant.

Conclusion on mystery of influence

Let me conclude with the following thought.

It is very important to discipline ourselves to assessing our knowledge properly. There are things which we know, and things that we do not know. It is important that we have an adequate accounting of what we do know and it is important that we have an adequate accounting of what we do not know.

Thus, in spite of the systematic denial over the last century by many psychologists, especially the experimental psychologists who have virtually monopolised the university professorships, it is known that human beings think and feel and have some willful determination of their conduct.

At the same time there are things which are unknown; and it is important not to pretend that the unknown is known, or to pretend that the unknown does not exist.

Let me speak about the unknown. There is authority to speak about the unknown from the known.

We know that there is life. We know that there is mind. We know that there is a world of physical things.

This does not mean, however, that we have yet gotten a proper account of these, or a proper account of the relationships that prevail among life, mind and the physical world.

I have spoken of cause and of law.in this presention. These are sub-headings, as it were, under the heading of influence. I think the word influence is a word of sufficient generality to include cause and law. I have spoken of determination. That too falls under the heading of influence.

We also know that the human being is an origin of much that goes on in the world; that the human being is a locus of major determination of what transpires. We know that the human being is a source of influence. Human influence should be a major topic for psychology in the future.

But, in point of fact, the accounts that we have developed so far in the history of civilisation about influence are woefully inadequate. The fact is that we are collectively grossly ignorant of what influence is. Whether we think of influences as force, cause, law, agency, direction, purpose, plan, push and shove even, it is very real. Yet we understand it poorly..

We need to develop some tolerance for mystery. Mystery is real. And we deceive ourselves by denying that it exists. Strategically, it is of value to recognise that the acknowledgement of mystery is the way to its dissipation.

Thank you.